

## OFFENBACH IN AMERICA.

## THE COMPOSER'S NEW BOOK.

QUAINT OPINIONS AND INFORMATION CONCERNING THE THEATERS, THE OPERA, AND THE LATE JAMES FISK—THE CONDITION OF THE DRAMA AND HOW IT MIGHT BE IMPROVED—CURSORY REMARKS ON WOMEN AND DRESS, HOTELS AND WAITERS.

[FROM THE REGULAR CORRESPONDENT OF THE TRIBUNE.]

LONDON, Jan. 25.—The opera bouffe composer, M. Jacques Offenbach, who favored you with a visit last year, has written a book about America which appeared two or three days ago in Paris. It is, so far as I recollect, the fifth French book on the United States which has been published within the last few months. M. Offenbach joins the company of M. Simeoni, M. Jamet, the Marquis de Talleyrand-Périgord, and M. Molinari. There may be others "Offenbach in Amérique" in the rather astonishing title of this latest production; to which is added, in an explanatory way, "Notes d'un Musicien en Voyage." (Levy, Paris.) It is a poor book enough, flippant and illusory, but entertaining here and there, and capable of being skimmed without too much fatigue. It might not interest anybody but an American, but an American strives to be interested in whatever is said about his own country, believing that something may be learned from everybody, even from a musician who has devoted his energies to supplying Madeleine Schneider with a suitable medium for the display of her peculiar talents. M. Offenbach's musical abilities are undoubtful, and since he traveled as a musician, and his book is entitled, the book of a musician, we might hope for at least some useful criticism on the state of musical art in America. But M. Offenbach is not an *homme sérieux*. His own pretensions are little for. There is no reason why we should part from him on this point. His book is foolish but not ill-natured, and if it be true that his visit was a failure—which does not seem to be his opinion—he bears no malice against us. To him, as to many Europeans, the people of the United States are an object of wonder very much as South Sea islanders of the time in which 250 hours are allotted, fed, and instructed. The congressionals also supports Sunday schools and missions, and employs 45 clergymen.

M. Offenbach certainly ought to have something useful to say on theaters, to which he devotes 10 pages. He tells us that the buildings are admirable, "all on the same model," and exactly eight boxes in each. A manager has the right to go into bankruptcy three or four times; the oftener the better. "One manager was pointed out to me who had failed six or seven times. He is wonderfully clever, I was told, and will bring out a magnificent company next winter. But where will he get the money? I asked. His creditors will lend it, in the hope that he may succeed and pay what he owes them." Miss Kellogg (sic) is described as an English singer between 32 and 34 years old, with a very fine voice. She sang in Meyerbeer's *Todala Nore*. The opera had not been properly rehearsed, says M. Offenbach; the chorus and orchestra chased each other about and never could go together; part of the orchestra, moreover, including sundry trombones and bassoons, being mixed in with the audience, for want of room in their proper place. This occurred in Booth's Theater. At the Lyceum still more extraordinary things happened. The orchestra had been put out of sight; an arrangement which proved in some respects inconvenient. It was difficult to hear, and the musicians crowded together in a fit-and-sufficing from the heat, cooled themselves off as they could. The first evening one of the violins loosened his cravat and unbuttoned his waistcoat. The next, they took off their coats and played in shirt-sleeves. In the course of the week the whole orchestra was in disarray; then, one evening the audience suddenly perceived a thin cloud of smoke rising from beneath the stage, and a panic began. But it was only the musicians who had lighted their cigars. In the end they went back to their old place. But M. Offenbach can be complimentary sometimes. He saw at Wallack's a piece which he calls "The Mighty Dardar," in which the Florentines played, and are praised as two exceptionally good artists, one of whom reminds M. Offenbach of Geoffroy, the other of Aphonsine, and they are engaged for 400 nights to play the same piece. The company supporting the Florentines played extremely well together, thought M. Offenbach; the ensemble was perfect. And he noticed particularly a charming *figurine*, hardly 17, Miss Baker, whom he thought a very remarkable young person, having lost, not forgetting either, an excellent young person called Miss Cummins. Nearly half the chapter on theaters, however, is devoted to the late Mr. Fisk and his Grand Opera House. Respecting Fisk, we are told that he was not only manager of the largest theater in New-York, but vice-president of a railroad, commander of a line of steamers, and colonel of a regiment. "He had boldness and energy, and great originality in his methods of conducting business. He required every person who applied for a situation on his railroad to exhibit in his regiment, which thus became one of the most important subscribers. The honors and emoluments of the college will be open alike to Mohammedans, Hindus, and Christians."

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Coming from these high generalities to particular individuals, the author of the Grand Duchess favors us with a sketch of Mr. Thomas, whom some Americans have heretofore thought an accomplished conductor. He has formed, M. Offenbach admits, an excellent orchestra, but otherwise is not equal to his reputation. He conducts "haphazard," without fire or enthusiasm, and when by chance he becomes energetic, he uses both arms at the same time, so that from behind he resembles a huge bird about to take flight. And he is extremely fond of the music of the director of the Paris Conservatory, M. Ambroise Thomas. It is seldom that some nice by the author of Thomas does not appear on his programs, the public believing that it is his own! All this is less amiable than was to be hoped; though it may not be altogether surprising that a composer and conductor whose ideas of fire and enthusiasm find expression in the Orpheus *couleur d'âme* should perceive a lack of these qualities in Mr. Thomas.

There are opinions and statements equally positive and accurate on most other matters. At the hotels M. Offenbach appears to have paid \$20 a day and never saw anybody—Europeans excepted—drink anything but ice water. He stayed at the Fifth Avenue and complains that he had 30 dishes served together—soup, fish, meat, "immunical" vegetables, sweets, and ten kinds of dessert—all brought at the same time. He finds the street cars crowded and does not like being charged \$7 for a drive in the park—two points on which he may be sure of general sympathy. The Brunswick he thinks a better restaurant than Delmonico's, but presently it appears that the superiority of the former is due to the size of his saloon, the Madison square Delmonico not being then open. The Brunswick square Delmonico is not being better than either, he did not hear of. The service toots him everywhere. Being ice water, a third must be called for your dinner, a fourth for wine, a fifth to draw the cork.

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G. W. S.

## RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCE.

There are 3,000 Chinese in the Sandwich Islands. About 30 of them profess to be Christians.

Father Wilbur, the Indian agent at Fort Sumner, reports the conversion of 100 of the Indians to the faith.

The week from Sunday, Feb. 11, to Feb. 18, was spent in Great Britain as a period of prayer for young women.

Methodist Sunday-school congresses will be held this year in Chicago, Indianapolis, St. Louis, and other cities of the West. The Rev. Dr. J. H. Vincent is the organizer.

The *Alliance*, Prof. Swinburne's paper, commands Mrs. Talmage's sermons to the members of the various professions. It is of the opinion that orthodox preachers would do well to follow this example.

The Rev. Dr. Sawtelle (Baptist) of San Francisco has accepted a call to Clevelands, Mass. He will make one of a company of ministers who are preparing a Baptist company on the New Testament.

It is stated that Cardinal Manning will contribute a series of papers to *The Nineteenth Century*, the new English review, entitled "The True Story of the Vatican Council." The first of the series is to appear in April.

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